



# COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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COMMUNITY SERVICE NEWSLETTER is published six times a year by Community Service, Inc. Our purpose is to promote the small community as a basic social institution involving organic units of economic, social and spiritual development.

## Families Need Community

by Jane Folmer

In this year's Community Service Conference on "Children and Community," we aim to bring into focus the function of the small community as an integrating force in the lives of children and families. This perspective we believe is particularly needed and, for the most part missing, in institutional approaches to dealing with the needs of children in which the child is separated from the rest of the family by special programs and special environments. Help provided to individuals without concern for the community tend to further alienate people from their most critical sources of support, the family and the community.

The American industrial society of the last century has effectively broken traditional family ties and replaced the community experience with the ironic combination of physical crowding and emotional isolation within the urban and suburban setting. Men, women and children have been taken away from the home by work and schooling, separating their lives and experiences from the other family members.

The result is readily apparent in every aspect of our daily lives. As the primary role of the family has changed from a source of nourishment, protection, education, livelihood and emotional support to a unit of manpower and consumption, what once was a practical center of activity

and mutual aid has become just a resting place for the labor units of an industrial society.

More than ever people seem to be physically and emotionally separating from families, trying to avoid the responsibility and dependency which family entails. Marriage is being entered into conditionally and in series or avoided altogether. Complete separation from the family and the home is not only common among young people but expected.

What we have come to consider an "average" family in this country is now made up of only four people, and only 35% of the households actually consist of two parents and one or more children. In 54% of those families both parents work outside the home. In addition, 6.2% of American families have been reduced to the smallest possible family unit--the mother and her child.

It might appear as if the family has outlived its usefulness. Perhaps for some that is true. Those who adopt alternative life styles in an attempt to avoid it, however, seem inevitably drawn to society's substitute families. They join communes, religious cults, street gangs, encounter groups, protest groups, and innumerable other clubs and organizations. Much of what they are seeking has traditionally been provided by family and community.

The biological family provides a uniquely intimate and spontaneous opportunity for the intense, trusting relationship a child needs to give him the courage to learn how to be a human being. Unconditional loyalty based on responsible parenthood, the opportunity for self-discovery without fear of rejection, and the validation of self through personal, long-term relationships can best be hoped for through the inherent continuity and stability of family.

As statistics on divorce, welfare, crime and mental health readily indicate, however, more and more families are having trouble fulfilling their critical role. It may be that we are expecting too much of today's small, isolated nuclear families. We expect them to be emotionally and economically stable and autonomous. We expect families to provide children that will be healthy, happy, responsible, hard-working, educated citizens.

As families have been reduced in size and purpose, they have also been reduced in effectiveness. When the family is no longer a place where people of assorted ages and talents can live and work together, lasting relationships cannot grow and thrive out of common needs and experiences. Nowadays even the youngest and oldest family members are encouraged to "do their own thing," to go separately to places where they are segregated by age, ability, and interest without regard for the other family members or the family as a whole.

The institutions which have been created to help with the problems of families and the results of family problems are multiplying and expanding and are still unable to satisfy the need. Turning to the experts and specialists for answers and assistance leaves families even more fragmented, confused and unsure of their own capabilities. Most services and institutions which try to rescue failing families serve to diminish the family's role even further.

Mobility, economic necessity, and an extraordinary emphasis on personal independence

and achievement have also isolated people and families from their natural support systems. In order to assure a competitive, mobile work force for industry, the schools, the media, business and industry have taught and reinforced personal independence and competitiveness. The emphasis on personal achievement and self-reliance which has become so ingrained in American society serves primarily the industrial model in which people are interchangeable parts of the machinery.

As Lawrence H. Fuchs points out in his book, *FAMILY MATTERS*, "the essential problem is attitude. As long as Americans value above everything else personal independence, with its emphasis on privacy and fear of commitment, families will be in serious trouble and communities virtually nonexistent."

What people need is family and what families need is other families associated in small communities. America has a strong tradition of groups of families working together to serve a common need: hunting parties, wagon trains, barn raisings, threshing parties, etc. Today, as then, families require the reinforcement in each other of the belief that their needs are valid, that they are worthy and capable of making the changes they seek, and that the effort required will be worth the outcome.

The significant similarity between successful families and successful communities of families is a shared goal and shared work to reach that goal. The results of working together for changes which reinforce rather than undermine the strength and viability of families and small communities will afford them the opportunity to once again fulfill their essential role as the fundamental sources of human society. The challenge is in helping families to become activators of change in association with others in community rather than recipients of change in an impersonal, economically oriented society. Only then will the needs of the family and the small community begin to compete effectively with the demands of the industrial and economic system.

# Rene Dubos on Neighborhoods

We are glad to be able to reprint here an abbreviated version of an interview by Thomas Glynn with Dr. Rene Dubos that was printed in the December 1977 issue of *NEIGHBORHOOD, the Journal for City Preservation*, a publication of the New York Urban Coalition, 1515 Broadway, NY 10036. Glynn is its managing editor.

Glynn: I read your book, *SO HUMAN AN ANIMAL*, and I was fascinated with your childhood. Maybe we can start from there and your feeling of what "neighborhood" meant to you.

Dubos: I was brought up in a very small village of 450 people. So perhaps being brought up in a highly integrated village in France made me aware of a kind of biological aspect of human nature which is essential for the definition of neighborhood.

Most people cannot relate to a very large number of people. What is the optimum number is very difficult to decide. But there have been experiments on that. The experiments ask, how many persons can you remember? How many can you identify sufficiently well, so that if you see them you will not only recognize them but know what to expect of them? It's not that you like them or dislike them, but to some extent you know what to expect of them. The numbers are never over a thousand. Beyond that, it becomes difficult to remember.

There have been experiments at schools which indicate that if a school gets more than 1,500 or 2,000 students, you have to change the organization. You have to set up all sorts of disciplinary structures. Whereas under a thousand students, the school can be managed in a very personal sort of way. Universities which have grown so large lose their spirit, in large part. Attempts have been made to break up universities into colleges. The sizes of these colleges are about 500 to 1,000 students, so there seems to be a limited number to whom we can relate.

In cities it's very difficult to formulate that principle of limited numbers in a precise manner. Nevertheless, I have seen it in New York City. I have seen neighborhoods become reestablished. There are streets where people know each other well enough so that when they walk, they recognize the people who belong there. I have seen block parties being organized. I see a spontaneous attempt at recapturing this kind of human relationship. This does not imply that one likes everybody, but means that one knows what to expect.

When I moved to Paris, I was from a poor family. My father was a small butcher. I lost my father at the beginning of World War I, so I ran the butcher shop with my mother. That's important because you see what an intense sense of "neighborhood" it gave me, in a big city like Paris. After all, Paris, even then, had two million people.

My mother was extremely perceptive to human contacts and the butcher shop became a kind of social center. People didn't come only to buy lamb chops; they engaged in conversation. This meant that within about three or four blocks of that butcher shop, I knew everybody...and I knew them in such a way that I could talk to them. That has had tremendous practical importance in my life. A gentleman used to come in all the time to buy his lamb chops. I engaged in conversation with him and soon I knew he was a painter... This gentleman invited me to see his paintings. Soon I became so involved in painting that it allowed me to move into another level of society...a different social class. This opened new vistas for me. That can happen only within a limited human situation, where the occasion presents itself for the human interplay--this very special "thing" which occurs among human beings only if they see each other often.

Glynn: Is there any parallel between the principles of biology--i.e., the way cells organize themselves--and small scale groupings of people?

Dubos: All animals form very limited social groups. You would think that each species of bird has a song which is the same for all birds of that species. But that's not true. They use different "dialects." Take the finch family. To you, the finch in one woods sounds the same as the finch in another woods 10 miles away. But that's not true at all. It's the same song but a different "dialect"...to such an extent that those finches from different woods will not mate. It's very extraordinary.

Practically all animal colonies break up into small subunits. This is true with apes. Jane Goodall, who has been studying apes in Africa, has shown that apes exist in small tribes. The size is determined by how much food the animal can conveniently obtain.

There are many other examples of this. So I think that we are tribal creatures. Let me restate that in another form.

I'm going to start from the beginning of human life. Hunters in the Stone Age were very well organized. By going to the South of France, where the Stone Age people functioned around those famous caves, you can see that each one of the caves was occupied by about 200 persons. Each cave formed a very good unit which had a style of its own. This has been well demonstrated here where they've discovered sandals that were slightly different in style from one place to the other. And stone tools vary with nine or ten differences from one area to another. So, unquestionably, from the beginning, human beings lived in small limited clusters.

The New Stone Age, about 10,000 years ago--villages that we know of--had about 500 persons.

So, it seems, in some way, there must be something in the human brain that limits the number of identifications we can make. The human brain doesn't change, biologically, so somewhere we still have that limitation. And, I suspect, it is reflected in practically all social organizations.

Now, the industrial revolution in Europe brought an enormous migration of people from the villages into the cities, concentrating them around large factories. That brought about the most awful human destruction one can imagine. I have no doubt that the immense human tragedies of the late 19th century were in large part a consequence of the total disintegration of the prior social structure caused by bringing people together who had not learned to function with each other. And we have been suffering from that ever since.

New York, or any other large city, still suffers from an influx of people with this problem. It's only if we become sufficiently stable that we can rediscover some principle of integration that will solve the problems of our cities. This will be through the neighborhoods...



Everywhere in this country people want to know more about decentralization. "Can it really be done?" they ask. All this accounts for the success of (the late British economist, E. F.) Schumacher's book, *SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL*. It has immense political value.

The book is successful because most people want to know how we can return to smaller social units. And now we are back in the idea of "neighborhood." I think the resentment against big hospitals is a desire to recreate smaller medical units where we can reestablish personal contact with physicians. In every aspect of life, we want to reestablish direct human contact. I think the social consequences of this are phenomenal.

Albert Schweitzer was criticized for allowing the family of the patient to move into the hospital. But the fact is that we now recognize the enormous psychological benefit--psychological support--maintaining the atmosphere of the village in the hospital does for the patient...

Glynn: In the past 10 years, we've been immersed in the idea of Marshall McLuhan's "global village" and how we're all becoming more in touch with each other. To a certain extent, I guess this might be true. But you say just the opposite is happening. Everyone is extremely interested in establishing their own local territory.

Dubos: In my last book, BEAST OR ANGEL, I have a whole section about the problems of the city, as I see them. I'll tell you how I became sensitive to that.

One day, I was with someone from New Jersey who said he was now living in Vermont. I discovered he was in the government there. He told me, "you know in Vermont, we are interested in maintaining our identity." I was amused because I knew he was from New Jersey. He said, "I've talked to the governor and to people in Congress and the House in Vermont and they would like you to come and talk about the spirit of the place."

So I talked to the Assembly in Vermont about how it was important that each part of the country retains its identity; that without this identity, nobody makes any effort to improve the environment. But before I spoke, there was a social gathering of about 20 or 30 persons, including the governor, some public officials, some big business people... I asked them where they were from. Practically all of them came from the New York area, New Jersey, and Ohio--from very large cities, and they all had elected to live in a more integrated community. So I began to gain the impression that in our society, along with that tremendous movement which seems to create that global village of McLuhan's, there is another movement: people choosing the kind of environment they are fond of if they have enough economic and social



mobility to do so. All those people liked to be in Vermont. They liked that way of life and they were the people who were strongest in maintaining Vermont as it is.

...Other people elect other ways. Some elect to be in the heart of New York City, and I am one of them...

I mention two persons of almost the same age... Lewis Mumford and myself. We are very good friends. We have the same kinds of interests. He has written one of those wonderful books about the history of the city. Recently I have written a fair amount about urban life and talked a great deal about it. But I can do it living in Manhattan. Lewis Mumford elects to live in Amenia, New York, which is a little town about 100 miles away from New York City... He feels that large cities aren't manageable; therefore he does not want to be part of them.

Personally, I have for almost 50 years lived in New York City..east of Second Avenue. I've always lived in that neighborhood. I live on 65th Street now, which is one of the most despicable streets in New York City. Yet whenever I enter this area, all of a sudden I relax. I cannot walk on those streets without seeing people I recognize.

So, I personally think the global village of McLuhan is not a biological reality. McLuhan writes about all of that, but he never moved from Toronto. His life is completely different from what he talks about...

Glynn: Are there any practical ways to break New York City down and revive its communities? Or do you think that our in-

stitutions have grown so huge that it will be difficult chopping them up? You mentioned before that universities have broken themselves up into colleges. Do you see similar efforts taking place along those lines, maybe in other areas?

Dubos: I'm going to cite two other cities, Paris and London. During the past three or four years when I have gone back--what I discover is within Paris there is a multiplicity of small community theaters being created, mainly for the performing arts and music, which function locally within each one of the sections of Paris.

In London--all over England--this is happening again. I say again, because it had disappeared. What is happening in England is that people have become a little poorer and so they are creating small choral groups, acting groups, groups that do all sorts of things together. Now, I ask myself what kind of social structure exists that permits this to happen? I look around and I find only one. And I'm disturbed that I find only that one. It's the churches and synagogues. In our society, as far as I can see, the religious organizations have survived as a structure, and are beginning to do all sorts of things... So there is that sense of something spiritual and the desire to become reunited which persists... But I wish there were other social structures.

Glynn: It's backtracking a bit, but I was wondering how in your background as a biologist, you got interested in broader issues?

Dubos: At the beginning of World War II, my first wife, who was French, developed tuberculosis and died of it. I asked myself, "Why did she develop tuberculosis?" We lived at that time in Dobbs Ferry, New York... I knew that she, as a young girl had contracted tuberculosis but had recovered and apparently lived a normal life. The war came and our whole social life suffered terribly. Our families (in France) were disorganized socially. Her old disease was reactivated and caused her death.

So that made me change my interest from being purely a medical bacteriologist to concerning myself with the broader question. How do people live? What is important for health? I became convinced that the social support of a person is the most important aspect of human life.

By social support I mean the whole set of forces that relate the person to the environment. And when I say environment, I mean physical and social, in which that person lives. I think our society is horrible in completely ignoring that. Increasingly, I am writing about, talking about and preaching about it. There is very little social study about the effect of this "environment." But I introduce it into all aspects of my life. If I become interested in energy, then I say the most important aspect of the energy problem is that we must not create a more centralized society where human contacts are completely broken up. So I say, let's think energy in terms of social units where people can once more become identified with the place where they live; where human relationships are not lost. For me it's very clear. It's a biological problem, but there is very little biological knowledge. So, the only thing I can do is to preach.



# Neighborhood and Community

by Griscom Morgan

For almost forty years Community Service has been pioneering beyond the beaten track with the perception that the mass, highly urbanized, large city society, and the economic and educational systems that have been intrinsic to these societies, are not viable in the long run. We have sought to document the case with basic scientific and historical studies in different aspects of the subject and accumulate a wide range of relevant evidence. We and a few others with similar concern have been working against the main current of our civilization.

At the one scientific gathering on the subject at an annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, all ten of the qualified scientists from various disciplines from over the world who were prepared to discuss the subject concurred in the conclusion that the large city was not biologically viable in terms of survival over many generations. But real estate, financial and other interests had too much at stake and would not stand for a realistic reporting of the evidence in the major newspapers.

We have been working in both theoretical studies and action programs to develop alternative ways ahead for the future, not forgetting that the great numbers of people in the large cities must still find ways of relating to the urban stress and decay to which they are subject.

We rejoice when others become aware of some of the issues we have been so long concerned with. Among them, Rene Dubos is one of the most creative and persuasive voices that has been raised in recent years. Coming out of the top rank of significant biologists with his pioneering work in the development of antibiotics, now Professor Emeritus of Microbiology at Rockefeller University, Dr.

Dubos was forced by personal experience to turn his attention to the intimate, small, community as essential to personal mental, physical, and social health. His recent book, *SO HUMAN AN ANIMAL*, which won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize, is a wide ranging and fine reading challenge to join in the creation of a better society.

Dr. Dubos is now a New Yorker and he, like many others, sees the neighborhood in the large city as a focus of endeavor. We at Community Service have found that those urban populations over the world, that in their neighborhoods kept the small community character they brought to the city from rural communities, have best survived. (This is discussed for example, in Arthur Morgan's "The Surashtras of Madura: A Self-sustaining City Population," *Community Service News*, Sept. 1949.) But we have observed that urban mobility has undermined much of the endeavor in this direction, and that even with such neighborhoods, large cities in general have led to progressive decline in vitality of their inhabitants over the course of generations.

The contrast between Dr. Dubos' perspective and ours is illustrated in his comment that schools having more than a thousand students are too large and our perception that small children in particular need schools of less than a hundred students within their local small communities. Older children, too, need to be in schools of well under a thousand. Studies have shown that the larger the school, beyond a hundred or so students, the fewer their friends and the less their personal contact with teachers.

Our most dramatic evidence of the harmful biological effect of large city living is the rate of murder (three quarters of which take place between acquaintances). It increases progressively with the size of the city, the largest cities having about twelve times the rate of murder of small communities. Similar reactions to high population densities have been found to develop among lower animals along with their generation to generation decline in vitality and ability to survive.

# Economic Basis of Idealism

by Jim DeWeese

The independence of a lawyer's professional judgment is traditionally regarded as the badge and strength of the legal profession. Canon 5 of the Code of Professional Responsibility states, "A lawyer should exercise independent professional judgment on behalf of a client." Many of us have additional high ideals we wish to pursue--like bringing assistance to the poor or championing individual rights.

If our ideals are distinctly above those which generally prevail, then our ideals shall be put to the test as those with lower standards make difficult demands on us as their attorneys or as individuals. Situations will arise where our independent judgment and ideals can be maintained only at the cost of a lost client or an antagonized supervisor or even the loss of our position or employment.

There is consequently an economic basis to idealism. Will we be ready to make the personal and economic sacrifices that may be required to maintain our ideals? Arthur Morgan\*, past president of Antioch College and first head of the Tennessee Valley Authority, said that the development of wisdom, skill, and power in harmonizing our economic needs with our ideals should be an important part of any life philosophy. A person who is ineffective in achieving this harmony will find himself constantly confronted with crises in which he is compelled either to throw away his ideals or to suffer economic disaster.

Mr. Morgan illustrated his remarks with the following story:



Two men worked as auditors for a corporation, each on a substantial salary. One of them lived in a manner which, according to popular opinion, was fitting to a person of his station. He owned a good car, he and his wife each belonged to a golf club and to a club in the city. They had a modest but pleasant apartment with one maid, and entertained as they liked to be entertained by their friends. They hoped sometime to have children, but had not yet saved any money, and could not yet afford any.

The other man lived on a two-acre tract out of town. He and his wife and children got most of their exercise in the garden. A three-year old car furnished transportation. They found considerable exploration necessary in order to build up a supply of friends with tastes similar to their own, but still economically within their reach. A quarter of their income went into savings.

The corporation for which they worked came into difficulties through dishonest management, and they were ordered to falsify their accounts. The country club auditor felt compelled to do so. Protesting the unwillingness of his associate, he said, "I don't want to do this any more than you do. But a man must live, and what else is there to do? I have to pay for rent and food. Moreover, a man must maintain his social position, or he is lost in these days. It's the way the world is run." These reasons his more thrifty associate had met and answered years before in planning his life.\*

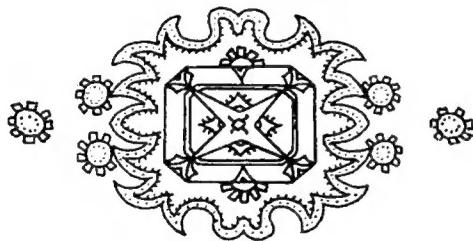
We are in an unstable age, when stresses and economic dislocations develop suddenly and unexpectedly. Ideals which seemed so secure are suddenly put under severe test. Many men, when the unexpected test comes, surrender their ideals to their economic or political need and say, "What else could I do? I could not help myself." The Watergate incident is a plain example of the sacrifice of high standards to the necessity of the moment.

Conventional society presses constantly for an increase in our standard of living as we earn higher incomes. It requires

courage to maintain a simplicity of living habits that is in contrast to our associates. But the greater the restraint and voluntary simplicity we practice in our lives, the greater will be our ability to maintain our independent judgment when we face the difficult situations. Even if we do not change our entire lives on the pattern of the auditor in the illustration, we can still reduce our needs and save some of our present incomes so that we can make the hard decisions.

Our ideals are among our highest treasures. Regardless of the skill we may develop, situations will occur when our ideals can be maintained only at great and unexpected sacrifice. Courage and conviction can face these situations when they come. But forethought and self-discipline to a large degree can eliminate the stress of sudden crises, and can provide an economic basis for maintaining our high ideals and independent judgment.

\*The ideas in this article are derived largely from Arthur & Lucy Morgan's pamphlet, "The Economic Basis of Idealism" (1934).



## Book Reviews

By Jane Folmer

SHARED HOUSES, SHARED LIVES -- The New Extended Families and How They Work by Eric Raimey. NY: St Martin's Press, 1979, 211 pages, paper, \$6.50.

Alternative lifestyles have always been available to people who had the courage and the imagination to create them. In recent years they have received a good deal more support and publicity as more and more people have sought ways to make their

lives and relationships more meaningful and satisfying.

Shared Houses, Shared Lives is the result of Eric Raimey's research and personal experience in an urban communal lifestyle which is rapidly growing in popularity. It is a close look at the rewards and drawbacks of sharing a home with an extended, nontraditional family.

The reasons cited for forming or joining a communal household begin with the savings of time and money that result from sharing expenses, household chores, child care, etc. Some people found that this gave them the opportunity to do more meaningful and creative work. But the strongest, most important motivation is the need for personal contact, companionship, security, and a supportive atmosphere.

More and more people are coming to recognize in themselves and their families the unfortunate emotional and psychological effects of an isolated, nuclear family existence. A shared house is a realistic way for people to create their own small, intimate community in a large, impersonal and uncaring city. The only requirement seems to be a small group of individuals and/or families with a genuine desire to become involved with other people and a house big enough to hold them.

The goal is generally not to create a utopia or find solutions for the problems of society, but just to create a comfortable home that "feels like a family or a miniature community." The typical organization is centered around the actual operation of the household with flexible guidelines and rules sufficient to maintain order and equality.

In addition to being an inspiration to those of us who are looking for alternatives, the book is full of information on how to get involved, how to select and obtain a house, and how to make it work on a day-to-day level. It also includes suggestions for a communal home ownership agreement and a directory of resource centers and publications.

THE CHILDREN OF PROSPERITY -- Thirteen Modern American Communes by Hugh Gardner, St. Martin's Press, 266 pp., paper, 1978

The Children of Prosperity is a first-hand account of thirteen representative rural communes in four western states during the period between 1965 and 1975. Hugh Gardner's study reveals how they came to be formed, how they structured themselves as organizations, what life in them was like, what happened to them over time, and why they succeeded or failed.

The author sees the modern commune movement as a significant social movement in America. The most important impacts of the movement on our culture, however, have been neither the communalism nor the spiritualism which they professed. Rather, the most significant trend initiated and inspired by the "children of prosperity" has been the back-to-the-land aspect which has contributed to the first reversal of the migration from country to city in the history of this nation. The modern communal movement also brought about renewed interest in self-sufficiency and the politics of decentralization.

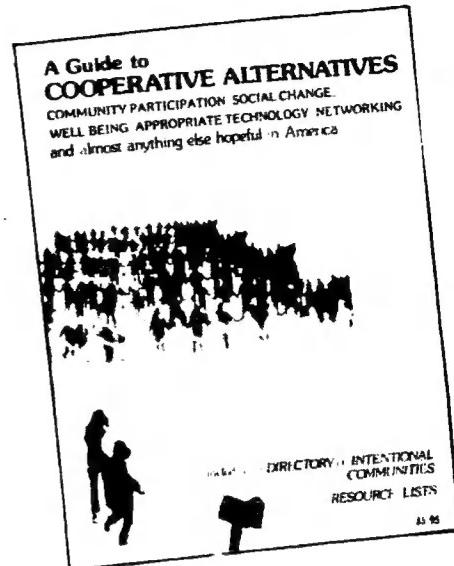
Hugh Gardner concludes that "The children of prosperity were, of course, only a vocal minority among the youth of their time. Nevertheless, I am one of those who suspects that the impact of their experiments and innovations in politics, education, culture, and social relations will be with us for a long time, even if many of their attempts at new societies failed."



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We not only welcome letters to the editor, but articles about any exceptional communities you know of or people who are doing unusual things to improve the life in their towns. Anyone submitting an article should enclose a self-addressed envelope if he/she wishes it returned if we cannot use it. The only recompense for use we can offer is the pleasure of seeing it in print and knowing that you have spread a good and useful idea.



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Don Hollister, Jane Folmer, Gris Morgan, and Jane Morgan, editor.

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### COMMUNITY SERVICE GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

At the June 30th Community Service Board Meeting Paul Hoover suggested that staff and trustees (who care to do so) write short position papers on the goals of Community Service and how to reach them, to be considered at our November membership meeting. He also asked that we inquire of our members whether they have any suggestions about this subject for us to consider. Please send your thoughts on this subject to Jane Morgan, Box 243, Yellow Springs, OH 45387.

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Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387  
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